

EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF CRYPTOGRAPHIC KEY GENERATIONS

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

- 5 The present invention relates to management of cryptographic keys between entities in a communication system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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Information security is an area of vital importance in today's information technology society.

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Cryptographic key management plays a fundamental role as the basis for a number of information security techniques including, among others, confidentiality, entity authentication, data integrity and digital signatures. For an introduction to the subject of cryptography in general and key management in particular we refer to [1] and [5] (chapter 13), respectively. Below is a summary of key management relevant for the present context, in part based on the standard reference [5].

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- Keying relationships generally involve at least two roles: a "producer" and a "consumer" of keying material. The objective of key management is to maintain keying relationships and keying material in a manner which counters relevant threats, such as e.g. compromise of confidentiality of secret keys. Key management is usually provided within the context of a specific security policy explicitly or implicitly defining the threats that the considered system is intended to address, e.g. by means of practices and procedures to be followed. Such a policy may include procedures or instructions for avoiding usage of a key that is no longer valid, or for other than an intended purpose.
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Various techniques and protocols are available to distribute cryptographic keys, the confidentiality of which must be preserved between communicating entities. One technique is the use of *key layering*, which is a classification of keys in degrees of confidentiality mirroring the sensitivity of the data being protected:

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1. *Master keys* – Long-term keys at the highest level in the hierarchy,
2. *Key-encrypting keys* – symmetric keys used for key transport or storage of other keys
3. *Data/session keys* – used to provide cryptographic operations on user data (e.g., encryption, and authentication). These are generally short-term keys.

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The keys at one layer are often used to protect items at a lower layer. This constraint is intended to make attacks more difficult, and to limit exposure resulting from compromise of a specific key.

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In addition to the key layering hierarchy mentioned above, keys may be classified based on temporal considerations. As indicated above, a security policy or an external event may necessitate change of keying material used in communication between entities. This relates to the notion of a *validity period* of a key - the time period over which it is valid for use by legitimate parties. Validity periods may e.g. serve to limit the time and information available for attacking data protected by a particular cryptographic algorithm, or to limit exposure in the case of compromise of a single key.

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Except in simple systems where secret keys may remain fixed for all time, validity periods associated with keys normally require that keys be updated periodically thereby creating sequences or *generations* of keys. Updates may involve use of existing keying material to establish new keying material, use of appropriate key establishment protocols, or key layering. However, to limit exposure in case of compromise of either long-term secret keys or past session keys, certain dependencies

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among keying material should be avoided. For example, securing a new session key by encrypting it under the old session key is not recommended (since compromise of the old key compromises the new).

- 5 A particular case of key update that is relevant for the present invention is that of keys with overlapping validity periods, i.e. when several generations of keys need to co-exist and where dependencies between keys such as indicated above must be avoided.

There may be several reasons for taking new data keys into service while old data keys
10 remain in use. One such reason is when there is a need to increase the protection of new data but where the old data for some reason does not need the increased protection: It is easy to envisage business models which depend on the secure protection of content for a certain period but where the content later on may be compromised with limited or no financial damage, examples include news services,
15 weather forecasts, etc.

Another reason may be relevant in the context of group key management: Assuming data securely shared between a group of entities, different entities in the group may have differing views on what constitutes the current, or latest generation key, leading to
20 different generations of keys used by different parties in communication. While it is easy to indicate the key generation being used, it may be difficult or even undesirable to require all entities to maintain the latest generation of keys, thus making it necessary to allow some degree of parallel use of new and old keys. One example of this is a Personal Area Network (PAN) consisting of a user's devices (mobile phone, laptop, personal
25 digital assistant, mp3-player, digital (video-) camera etc.) connected using some network technology/-ies and where the devices securely share the user's personal information, data, applications, or content, and where the user is applying a security policy of automated regular key updates. It may well be the case that some devices are turned off or otherwise not accessible during the key update, but should still be able to

communicate securely with other, updated, devices before having been possible to update.

5 A related problem concerns dynamic group entity privileges, e.g. when a group entity becomes excluded from access to future data while still being authorized to securely write data protected for the group. One example of this situation is content protection schemes where the revocation of one device should make it impossible for that device to render new content but where old content still should be possible to share with other devices. Thus entities that have the right privileges must maintain both old and new
10 keys to be able to take part of all communication.

In all these cases, there is a problem relating to the efficiency of managing data encrypted with different keys. Assuming a large number of key updates of this kind, where the old keys are still valid, severe storage problems may occur, in particular in
15 small devices, such as mobile phones, portable music playing devices, sensors, and so forth, where storage space is limited.

One attempted solution to this problem is to replace the current key with the next generation key and re-encrypt all previously encrypted data with the latest generation
20 key, thereby reducing the key storage to the latest key. However, such a solution adds the computational and distribution cost of re-encryption, which can be substantial if large amounts of data are encrypted. Moreover, it does not solve the group communication situations mentioned above, e.g. when an excluded member is no longer able to secretly write data, since it does not have access to the latest key and the other members have
25 replaced the old keys with the latest one. Another attempt, applicable to communication environments, is to require all devices to always have access to the latest key. As indicated above, this is not practical when devices may be turned off during key updates or otherwise have difficulties to contact the key issuer.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes these and other drawbacks of the prior art arrangements.

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It is a general object of the present invention to enable efficient key updates and use of any previous generation of keys while only requiring storage of one key.

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It is a particular object of the invention to provide means for group entities to communicate using any generation of keys while only requiring storage of one key in each entity.

These and other objects are met by the invention as defined by the accompanying patent claims.

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A basic concept of the invention is to define a relationship between cryptographic key generations such that earlier generations of keys efficiently may be derived from later ones but not the other way around, i.e. it is infeasible to derive later generations of keys from earlier ones without extra information.

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The invention generally relates to management of generations of cryptographic key information in an information environment (such as a communications environment) comprising a key-producing side generating and distributing key information to a key-consuming side. At key update, key information of a new key generation is distributed from the key-producing side to the key-consuming side. A basic idea according to the invention is to replace, on the key-consuming side, key information of an older key generation by the key information of the new key generation, and iteratively apply, whenever necessary, a predetermined one-way key derivation function to derive key information of at least one older key generation from the key information of the new key generation. In this way, the storage requirements on the key-consuming side can

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be significantly reduced. In fact, the only key that really needs to be stored by a receiving entity on the key-consuming side is the latest generation key. Older keys are efficiently derived using the key derivation function. As an example, the key derivation function may be a cryptographic hash function or similar one-way function.

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Preferably, the key-producing side generates the key information of the new key generation to be distributed by iteratively applying an instance of the predetermined one-way key derivation function starting from key information of a predetermined generation, such as the key information of a master key generation or any intermediate
10 key generation initially known only to the producing side. In this case, the producing side typically generates and stores a random "master key" and "backwardly" derives, by iterated application of the key derivation function, sufficiently many key generations for the considered application. By iteratively applying a one-way key derivation function a given number n of times, a first key generation may be produced
15 from the master key. To generate a next key generation, the key-producing side simply applies the key derivation function $n-1$ iterations, and so forth. This means that the producing side only has to store the master key and the current generation number.

Alternatively, the key-producing side generates key information of the new key
20 generation by applying a trap-door function of the predetermined one-way key derivation function starting from key information of any older key generation. A function based on a public-key cryptosystem (which is a one-way function with a so-called trapdoor) could be used for this purpose. The consuming side only knows the public key, whereas the producing side may use the private key as a trapdoor to go
25 "forward" in the chain of key generations.

In a typical application, the key-producing side comprises a key-issuing server issuing security key information to be shared by at least one communication device and a provider of protected data.

The invention is particularly useful for group key management, where the key-consuming side comprises an entire group or community of devices or entities. In general, each group entity implements an instance of the predetermined one-way key derivation function, thereby enabling group devices with access to the new key generation to communicate (e.g. to share protected content from a content provider) not only based on the new key generation, but also based on any older key generation.

The invention enables efficient discrimination of excluded devices or entities by distributing, to the remaining non-excluded devices in a group, a later key generation than that available by the excluded device(s), keeping in mind that the one-way key derivation function effectively inhibits the derivation of later key generations.

Other input parameters to the key derivation function may include an access code such as a Personal Identification Number (PIN) known by a trusted administrator/owner/user. Advantageously, the one-way key derivation function is then implemented in such a way that relevant key information is generated only if additional data in the form of a predetermined access code is applied to the key derivation function. Yet another parameter could be the generation number itself, effectively creating a new key derivation function for each key generation.

It should be understood that the key information derived by iteratively applying the one-way key derivation function may correspond directly to a cryptographic key or may alternatively be transformed into such a key. The key information may also be transformed to a set of keys, each in effect derived from a key of the previous generation.

The invention can be employed in a variety of different applications, including but not limited to Digital Rights Management in a digital content distribution system, on-line gaming, file sharing in a Local or Personal Area Network (LAN/PAN), store-and-forward applications and securing on-line sessions.

The invention offers the following advantages:

- Enables efficient storage of key generations: The only key that needs to be stored by a receiving entity is the latest generation.
- Enables keys to be efficiently generated: Iterations of an efficient function.
- 5 - Enables group entities to communicate using any key generation: Any current or previous entity in the group is addressed by selecting a sufficiently early generation of key. Using a later key provides optional discrimination of excluded entities.
- No need to ensure reception of intermediate key updates: During key update in a group scenario, some entities may have missed a key update of a particular
10 generation. With the present invention, there is no need to keep track of any missing intermediate updates since all previous updates can be efficiently derived from a later generation key.
- Producers may implement and take advantage of the invention independently of its implementation and use by consumers.
- 15 - Allows policy-independent implementations: Different key issuers may have different policies for revocation or key validity periods without affecting the device implementation.
- Selective access to earlier key generations: The invention allows restricted access to previous generations of keys by discriminating on other parameters.

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Other advantages offered by the present invention will be appreciated upon reading of the below description of the embodiments of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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The invention, together with further objects and advantages thereof, will be best understood by reference to the following description taken together with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating the general key producing and key consuming roles in an exemplary information environment;

Fig. 2A illustrates a way of producing key generations on the key producing side in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2B illustrates a way of producing key generations on the key producing side in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 illustrates a way of deriving older key generations on the key consuming side in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 4 illustrates a scenario in which a key producer issues secret keys to be shared by a community of devices, with conventional key management; and

Fig. 5 illustrates a scenario in which a key producer issues secret keys to be shared by a community of devices, with key management in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

The embodiments described below are merely given as examples, and it should be understood that the present invention is not limited thereto. Further modifications, changes, and improvements that retain the basic underlying principles disclosed and claimed herein are within the scope of the invention.

Throughout the drawings, the same reference characters will be used for corresponding or similar elements.

With reference to Fig. 1, consider an information environment, here exemplified in the context of a communications system with at least one secret-key issuer S such as a key issuing server, at least one content or service provider P, and at least one potential receiver R. Using the terms from the background section, S is a "producer" and P and R are "consumers" of the keying material. Any S is assumed to have an a priori secure (e.g. confidential) channel with P and R. One objective is for provider(s) P to securely and efficiently convey data to receiver(s) R using the information provided by S. Another objective is to efficiently manage the secret information in S, P and R. The secure channels between S and P, and S and R are intended for key distribution and related information such as key generation, key policies including validity periods, scope etc. The roles S and P may coincide. The role of secret-key issuer may be different from the role of secret-key creator (see below; the party having generated the master key and optionally the key generations) but that distinction is natural to make for the person skilled in the art and thus need not be explicitly stressed in the present invention.

For a better understanding of the invention, it may be useful to begin with a description of some exemplary scenarios.

Scenario 1

S has generated a first generation secret key k_1 , which is distributed securely to P and R. P has protected data x_1 with k_1 and sent to R, who then can make appropriate operations (decryption, verifications etc) on data x_1 using the secret key k_1 . At key update, next generation secret key k_2 is distributed to P and R and subsequent data from P can be protected with a fresh key providing greater trustworthiness. The procedure is iterated for higher generation keys. An old key can still be used for the case a desired consumer doesn't have (physical or logical) access to a new key. After a number of key updates, the producer(s) and consumer(s) are facing a potential multitude of valid keys and data encrypted with various keys that all need to be securely stored and managed.

Several different procedures and orders are possible for distribution of keys and data, as is known by the person skilled in the art, such as:

1. First k_1 is sent to R. On request of x_1 from P by R, k_1 is sent to P from S and x_1 protected with k_1 sent from P to R. At key update, k_2 is sent to R etc.
- 5 2. On request of x_1 from P by R, k_1 is sent to P from S and x_1 protected with k_1 sent from P to R. Then k_1 is distributed to R. On request of x_1 from P by R, if there has been a key update, k_2 is sent to P from S etc.

Scenario 2

- 10 In this example, P and S coincide. In the previous example, data could be protected and distributed independently of the key distribution, e.g. in a store and forward situation. In this example, S (= P) and R wants to set up a secure communications session with key updates allowing multiple parallel sessions. Optionally embedded in a signaling protocol between S and R, S sends the first generation session key k_1 to R over the secure
- 15 channel. Using the first generation session key, S and R can exchange data securely without using the secure channel (thereby executing key layering: the a priori secure channel is one layer higher than the data channel). The secure channel is used for key updates when a new session is started. As old sessions may still be used in parallel there would potentially be a multitude of session keys to securely manage.

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Scenario 3

- The case of more than one potential receiver is of special interest and is studied in detail in this scenario. By way of example, assume a scenario in which we have a group, also referred to as a community C , comprising a set of entities or devices, d_1, \dots, d_N , a
- 25 secret-key issuing server S_C which issues secret keys to be shared by the community of devices and a provider P_C of protected data for this community. It is assumed that P_C and S_C collaborate, so that S_C can inform P_C about the currently valid shared secret-key. The third and last role involved is the user/owner/administrator U_C of the community of devices. The secret-key issuer is key producer and the others are key
- 30 consumers. The roles S , P and U need not be distinct.

For notational simplicity we do not explicitly include the dependency on the community though it is normally assumed that such a dependency exists. Also, for simplicity in the exemplary scenario and without loss of generality, we assume that there are only four devices, i.e. $N=4$.

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In order to appreciate and at the same time highlight some of the problems related to conventional key management, reference will first be made to the prior art Fig. 4. S has generated a first secret key k_1 , which it shares with d_1 , d_2 and d_3 . Device d_4 is not yet a member of the community. Assume also that we have data x_1 , protected with k_1 on d_1 , and that we have data x_2 , also protected with k_1 on device d_2 . At time t_1 , device d_3 voluntarily or involuntarily leaves the community. In the former case, d_3 informs S of the departure, in the latter case, S gets this information from some other source or takes the decision unilaterally. S makes this departure known to P , with the implication that P should no longer provide new data to the community of devices in such a way that it is possible for d_3 to get access to it.

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At time t_2 ($t_2 > t_1$), device d_1 requests new data x_3 from P . At this point, P will know that it cannot provide data protected with k_1 anymore, so it will ask S for a new key, k_2 and provide x_3 to d_1 protected with k_2 . Device d_1 , recognizing that it is not in possession of k_2 , will turn to S to acquire it. After authenticating as d_1 , k_2 is securely transferred to d_1 . If d_1 later on would like to provide x_3 to d_2 , the same thing will happen; d_2 will recognize that it is not in possession of k_2 (unless it recently asked for new protected data from P) and will contact S to acquire this data.

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At time t_3 ($t_3 > t_2$), d_2 transfers x_2 to d_1 . When this happens, there are a couple of possibilities:

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a. Device d_1 did not delete k_1 when it received k_2 but kept k_1 for future use

30 b. Device d_1 does not know anymore about k_1

In case *a*, there is a need for devices to store all shared secret keys k_1, \dots, k_M for all communities C_1, \dots, C_L they have been members of. In case *b*, there would be a need for d_i to contact S and ask for key k_i . The cost in this case is an increased number of interactions with S , and a requirement for S to store all shared secret keys for all communities they interact with.

Likewise, assume that at time t_4 ($t_4 > t_3$) device d_4 registers with S as a member of the community. In order for d_4 to get access to all data provided to the community, S would have to be able to provision d_4 with k_1, \dots, k_M , either directly or through a number of iterations, once again implying a need for local storage of previous keys in the key-issuer S .

The invention is applicable to these scenarios, mixed versions and other key/data distribution procedures. In particular, an exemplary application of the present invention is the sharing of content or licenses among devices in a Digital Rights Management (DRM) scenario, in which case P may be a content provider, S a license issuer, and R one or more content-consuming devices. Another application is group key management for file sharing in a Personal Area Network, in which case we may have $S = U = P$. As indicated, other applications include store-and-forward applications and applications for securing on-line sessions. Still many other applications are also possible.

A basic idea according to the invention involves replacing, at key update, an older key generation stored on the key-consuming side by the new key generation, and iteratively applying, whenever necessary, a predetermined *one-way* key derivation function to derive at least one older key generation from the new key generation. This reduces the storage requirements on the key-consuming side considerably, since only

the latest key generation needs to be stored in an optimized implementation. Older keys are efficiently derived using the key derivation function.

The invention is thus based on defining a relationship between generations of keys such that earlier generation of keys efficiently may be derived from later ones but not the other way around. On the key producing side, there are then at least two main possibilities for generating key information based on the predetermined one-way key derivation function. In general, the key generations may be produced "backwardly" from some initial or otherwise given key information using a one-way key derivation function or in a "forward" fashion from the current key generation using a trapdoor of the key derivation function. In the former case, the key generations are produced backwardly starting from key information of any predetermined generation, such as the key information of a master key generation or any intermediate key generation initially known only to the producing side.

Below is an outline of some basic steps in a first exemplary embodiment of the invention.

1. The key producer preferably generates and stores a random master key k_n (a pseudo-random number with the desired number of bits) and derives, by iterated application of a key derivation function F , sufficiently many (n) generations of data/session keys for the application in mind (Fig. 2A).
2. For simplicity, the key generations are preferably enumerated in reverse order, starting with the last derived key as generation 1 and so forth up until the n :th generation; k_1, k_2, \dots, k_n .
3. The key issuer distributes the first generation key using any suitable key distribution technique, e.g. ISO 11770-3 [7] or ANSI X9.44 [8].
4. At key update, the next generation key is distributed, again using any suitable key distribution technique. On the sending side, the relevant key generation is efficiently derived from the stored master key.
5. On the receiving side, the old generation key is deleted and replaced by the latest generation key. Older keys are efficiently derived using the predetermined key

derivation function, whenever necessary. If an entity on the key-consuming side has access to key k_j of generation j then key k_i of generation i , where $i < j$, can be derived by using the key derivation function F (Fig. 3).

- 5 To generate a next key generation, the key-producing side may simply apply the key derivation function $n-1$ iterations, and so forth. This means that the producing side only has to store the master key and the current generation number.

10 The function used to derive old keys from new keys should be designed such that it is infeasible for a consumer to derive new keys from old keys (Fig. 3). This implies that the function must be computationally hard to reverse, or "one-way". Cryptographic hash functions like SHA-256 ([6]) meet this requirement. Further, an efficient key derivation function eliminates any dimensioning problem, allowing a good margin for what is meant by "sufficiently many generations".

15 A function based on a public-key cryptosystem (which is a one-way function with a so-called trapdoor), where the consumer only knows the public key would also meet the requirement. Such a function would make it possible for the producer to use the trapdoor (private key) to go "forward" in the chain, alleviating the need to pre-generate later key
20 generations.

Below is an outline of some basic steps in a second exemplary embodiment of the invention, based on a one-way function with a trapdoor, e.g. exponentiation modulo a composite integer (note that the keys in this case may be longer than those in the
25 approach based on a one-way function without a trapdoor, due to the larger output size of known trapdoor one-way functions with comparable security).

1. The key producer generates a first generation key k_1 (a pseudo-random number with the desired number of bits).
2. The key issuer distributes the first generation key using any suitable key
30 distribution technique, e.g. ISO 11770-3 [7] or ANSI X9.44 [8].

3. At key update, the next generation key is distributed, again using any suitable key distribution technique. The relevant key generation is efficiently derived from the previous, old generation by using a trapdoor F_T of a predetermined one-way key derivation function (Fig. 2B).
- 5 4. On the receiving side, the old generation key is deleted and replaced by the latest generation key. Older keys are efficiently derived using the predetermined key derivation function as described above (Fig. 3), whenever necessary.

As indicated above, an important aspect of the invention is about defining a relation
10 between the different generations of shared keys $k_1, k_2, \dots, k_i, \dots, k_n$. The invention allows for a variety of trust models. However as a general feature, if an entity is trusted with access to key k_j of generation j then, subject to certain optional restrictions, the entity is also trusted with access to key k_i of generation i , where $i < j$.

- 15 The invention involves the use of an efficient function that allows a trusted device given the j :th generation key as input using this function and possibly other parameters to obtain older keys k_1, \dots, k_{j-1} as output, but where it is infeasible to obtain any newer keys $k_m, m > j$ based on the given or obtained information. Other input parameters may include an access code/Personal Identification Number (PIN) known by the trusted
20 administrator/owner/user U . For example, the access code may be provided to the user of a device from a content provider or an intermediate party, e.g. at purchase of a service or some digital content. It may be displayed on-line, or securely transferred to the user's device or even sent by ordinary mail or by fax to the user. To activate the service or gain access to the digital content, the user then has to enter the access code.
- 25 Without this parameter or with the parameter set to a default value if no value is provided, the function may fail to derive a key or derives an incorrect key. Other variants include restricted access to keys of certain age, so there is a cut-off time beyond which no keys are possible to derive without the appropriate code or PIN. The objective of such parameters may be to restrict access to older generations of keys and
30 only to trusted administrators/owners/users U of the devices, e.g. in the case when

devices are stolen, lost or sold. Yet another input parameter may be the current key generation number itself, effectively creating a new key derivation function for each key generation.

- 5 An exemplary manifestation of this invention is to define a computationally efficient function F between consecutive generations $k_{j-1} = F(k_j, \dots)$, $1 < j \leq n$ where the ellipsis indicates other possible parameters as mentioned above. With this construction, the trusted device can apply the function F iteratively a number of times to obtain any desired old key k_i , $1 \leq i < j$.

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A preferred embodiment is that of using a realization of a cryptographic one-way function F to ensure the unfeasibility of obtaining information of later generation keys than already known.

- 15 As an example, the concept of a hash chain is used. Let F be a cryptographic hash function f of one parameter, which outputs m -bit numbers to a given input number. Denote by n an estimated lower bound of the necessary number of generations for the relevant system. Let k_n be a random m -bit number, and define recursively $k_{j-1} = f(k_j)$ for $1 < j \leq n$.

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An application of this example may be $f = \text{SHA-256}$, $m = 256$ (bits) and n well above the anticipated number of revocations or periodic key updates in one set of devices. Note that this number may well be higher than the number of devices in the community at any given point in time. Since the community is dynamic, new devices
25 may join (and leave or become revoked) at any point during the lifetime of the community.

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As another example, an iteration of a key derivation function is used. Let F be a key derivation function KDF , which is one-way and takes an arbitrary number of input parameters. Denote by n an estimated lower bound of the necessary number of

generations for the relevant system. Let k_n be a random m -bit number, and define recursively $k_{j-1} = KDF(k_j, \dots)$ for $1 < j \leq n$.

An application of this example may be $KDF = \text{kdConcatenation}$, $m = 128$ (bits) and n well above the anticipated number of revocations in one set of devices as above.

The definition of the `kdConcatenation` key derivation function can be found in [1], and has the advantage of allowing other information such as the discussed use of a PIN to be included in the key derivation:

"The optional input variable OtherInfo may be used when appropriate, for example, to delimit the intended use of the key..." (ANSI X9.42-2000 [1])

As a third example, the combined concept of a hash chain and the iterated application of a one-way key derivation function is used. Again, let F be a key derivation function KDF, and let f be a cryptographic hash function of one variable, which outputs m -bit numbers to a given input number. Denote by n an estimated lower bound of the necessary number of generations for the relevant system. Let k_n be a random m -bit number, and define recursively $k_{j-1} = KDF(f(k_j), \dots)$ for $1 < j \leq n$.

An application of this example may be $KDF = \text{kdConcatenation}$, $f = \text{SHA-1}$, $m = 160$ (bits) and n well above the anticipated number of revocations in one set of devices as above.

Again, the definition of the `kdConcatenation` key derivation function can be found in [1], and has the advantage of allowing other information such as the discussed use of a PIN to be included in the key derivation.

An alternative embodiment is that of using a realization of a cryptographic one-way function F with a so-called trapdoor F_T to ensure the unfeasibility of obtaining information of later generation keys than already known for a consumer, but at the same time have the possibility for the producer to use the trapdoor to obtain next generation keys. In practice, such a function is generally less efficient than simple one-way functions. However, an advantage would be that the producer does not need to pre-compute a chain of generation keys, but can given the current generation key and the trapdoor function compute the next generation key, i.e., $k_{j+1} = F_T(k_j, \dots)$. This also gives the added advantage that the number of generations is not limited as in e.g., a hash chain based case (where the maximum number of generations is limited to the length of the hash chain).

It should be understood that the key information generated by iteratively applying the general key derivation function F may subsequently be transformed into the actual cryptographic key. This may involve changing the key size and/or other transformations of the key material. For example, a 160-bits key produced by using a SHA-1 hash function may be mapped into a 128-bits AES key.

The concept of a hash chain as such is known, e.g. from references [1], [3], and [4], but in completely different application areas. The Micali certificate revocation system is mainly addressing the problem of efficient revocation checking by avoiding repeated heavy verifications of signatures and instead exposing inverse images in a hash chain, images which are efficiently verified. The Lamport hash chain system described in [3] and [4] allows an authentication server to store a tuple $\langle n, \text{hash}^n(\text{password}) \rangle$ for each client, and upon receiving an authentication request from the client transmit $n-1$ to the client ($\text{hash}^n(.)$ denotes the n times repeated composition of the hash function: $\text{hash}^n(x) = \text{hash}(\text{hash}(\dots \text{hash}(x) \dots))$). The client then computes $s = \text{hash}^{n-1}(\text{password})$ and sends s to the authentication server. The authentication server authenticates the client by verifying that

$\text{hash}(s) = \text{hash}^n(\text{password})$, and if successful, replaces the tuple with $\langle n-1, \text{hash}^{n-1}(\text{password}) \rangle$.

Returning to the exemplary scenarios 1, 2, and 3 presented above, it can now be seen
5 how the invention would apply.

Application to scenario 1:

To fulfil the objectives of this scenario it is sufficient if S stores the master key k_n ,
associated generation number n and the current generation number i ; or if the trapdoor
10 variant is used then S needs only to store the current session key k_i and the
corresponding generation number i . Independently of this, R needs only to store the
current session key k_i and the corresponding generation number i .

Application to scenario 2:

15 Using the same embodiment of the invention as described in the application to
scenario 1, it is sufficient if S stores n , k_n , and the current generation number i , and if R
stores the current session key k_i and the generation number i . The implementation of
the predetermined one-way key derivation function on the key-consuming side enables
R to communicate based on any older key generation, even though one or more
20 previous key updates have been missed.

Application to scenario 3 (referring to Fig. 5):

This embodiment of the invention relates to key management in a community of
devices, including the issue of how to optimize exclusion of a device from the
25 community, e.g. as a result of a device voluntarily or involuntarily leaving the
community.

The invention alleviates the aforementioned problems and allows restricted storage
requirements in S and all devices d_1 through d_N , while at the same time enabling newly
30 adjoined devices to share old data even in the case of a large number of preceding

revocations. The invention also presents efficient distribution of new, shared keys within the community, and alleviates the need to keep track of any missing previous key updates. For example, once a device has access to the latest key generation it can communicate and share protected data also based on any of the older generations, even though the device may have been previously turned off for a while and missed one or more previous key updates.

In fact, the implementation of the predetermined one-way key derivation function enables group devices with access to the new key generation to communicate not only by use of the new key generation, but also based on any older key generation. In practice, this means that such group devices may communicate, e.g. with each other, with a provider of data protected by any of the key generations, and also with devices without access to the new key generation but which do have access to older key generations.

15

- At time t_2 , d_1 turns to P to acquire x_3 . P , knowing about the need for a new key, acquires k_2 from S , which in turn generates k_2 by applying F on k_n one time less than it did for k_1 , or alternatively by applying the trap-door function F_T on k_1 . P then protects x_3 with k_2 and transmits the protected x_3 to d_2 .

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- Having received x_3 , d_1 recognizes that it needs access to k_2 . Device d_1 therefore contacts S and receives, possibly after being authenticated, k_2 . At this point, d_1 replaces k_1 with k_2 in its internal storage and makes a note of k_2 's generation number.

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- When d_1 later on forwards x_3 to d_2 , d_2 will, in a similar fashion, need to contact S to acquire k_2 , and once received, replace k_1 in its internal storage with k_2 and make a note of its generation number.

- At time t_3 , d_2 forwards x_2 to d_1 . Device d_1 will recognize that x_2 is protected with k_1 , an earlier generation of k_2 , and will simply apply $F(k_2, \dots)$ to arrive at k_1 and subsequently decrypt x_2 .
- 5 • At time t_4 , the new device d_4 registers into the domain. Device d_4 will receive k_2 and information about its generation number from S – note that S need not send down information about earlier the earlier key k_1 . Any data in the community that is forwarded to d_4 after this point (and as long as d_4 is a registered member of the community) will be legible for d_4 (but not for d_3) thanks to the invention. If the
- 10 provided data is protected with an earlier key like k_1 , d_4 applies $F(k_2, \dots)$ to arrive at that key, thereby concluding scenario 3.

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